

Applicant Name Green Mountain Conservation District (GMCD)
Project Title Crow Creek Restoration Project

Project Abstract

The goal of the Crow Creek Restoration Project is to improve water quality and restore native fish populations in Crow Creek, a tributary to Prospect Creek, which flows into the Clark Fork River near the community of Thompson Falls, Montana. The project is located on public land in the Lolo National Forest.

Our project focuses on a section of Crow Creek where almost all riparian (streamside) vegetation was removed during construction of power lines. The removal of vegetation has significantly impacted the stream's ability to function properly, including instability of the streambanks, over-widening of the channel, increased erosion, and reduced stream shading. Two invasive weed species now make up the majority of riparian vegetation, which has further diminished proper functioning of the stream. The proposed project will restore this section of Crow Creek by reconstructing the stream channel, implementing streambank stabilization measures, and replanting the riparian area.

Because Crow Creek contains pure strain bull trout (listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) and west slope cutthroat trout (designated as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Montana) and currently lacks non-native fish competitors, it is a high priority for native fish protection efforts in the lower Clark Fork River system. The Prospect Creek Watershed Assessment recommends restoration of the stream channel and riparian area at the Crow Creek site as one of the highest priorities in the Prospect Creek drainage. The Lower Clark Fork River Drainage Habitat Problem Assessment ranks the Crow Creek site second for restoration out of 40 sub-watersheds in the entire lower Clark Fork Basin.

While the Crow Creek project will result in site-specific benefits at the project site (approximately two acres), the project will also result in reconnecting healthy stream and riparian habitat upstream and downstream of the site, thereby re-establishing a corridor for native fish and improving overall fish habitat and water quality in the Crow Creek watershed (approximately 9,000 acres) and the Prospect Creek drainage (approximately 112,000 acres).

The following partners are participating with GMCD in this project: U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (in consultation with the USFS on endangered species benefits), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (DFWP), the Prospect Creek Watershed Council, the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group, and Avista Corporation.